



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

May 19, 2006

News Release

ICE arrests 34 illegal aliens employed at nursery south of Buffalo

-- Arrests are part of ongoing investigation into the employment of illegal aliens --

SPRINGVILLE, NY -- Thirty-four illegal aliens are in custody today as part of an ongoing worksite enforcement operation being conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents and officers. In a pre-dawn operation, 29 Mexican nationals, all of whom were employed at the nearby Schichtel's Nursery Incorporated, were arrested as they left housing locations and boarded company buses that were taking them to work at various tree farm locations in the Springville and West Valley area. Five other illegal aliens were arrested after being encountered Thursday night.

The investigation began with an employment eligibility verification audit of the firm's I-9 forms. The I-9 is a form that must be filled out by an employer to verify that an individual is eligible to work in the United States. It requires the employee to provide specific types of identification as required by law to establish employability and identification.

During the ICE audit the investigation showed that most of the alien registration numbers provided on the I-9's kept on file by Schichtel's were either legitimate cards being used by the wrong individual or fraudulent cards not issued by the Department of Homeland Security.

The individuals will be processed at an ICE facility and will remain in custody until they are removed from the United States. Officers from the Buffalo office of detention and removal assisted in today's operation.

"ICE will use all of its investigative tools to combat the employment of illegal workers," said ICE Assistant Secretary Julie Myers. "These illegal nursery employees were working in clear violation of our laws. The nursery industry, among others, is at high risk for illegal employment. ICE will continue to bring increased scrutiny to these high-risk industries."

Peter J. Smith, special agent in charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Buffalo said, "ICE is committed to arresting and deporting individuals who take jobs away from citizens and legal immigrants." Smith added, "The investigation continues, including determining how illegal employees accessed fraudulent documents."

Although the investigation into the illegal employees has been underway for some time, the operation is part of the ICE interior enforcement strategy of the Secure Border Initiative announced last month by Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff.

In FY 2006 to date (April), ICE has already arrested more than **2,000** individuals as a result of worksite enforcement investigations. Furthermore, ICE has seized millions in cash and assets from unscrupulous employers this fiscal year as a result of worksite enforcement investigations.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.